JUNE 1991

Equity Matters

University of Toronto

Status of Women Office / Office of the President

Report to the President 1990-91 from Lois Reimer, Status of Women Officer

This report of the past year's activities is organized by major functions as currently defined for my position.

Advising the President and other senior administrators on issues and concerns relating to the status of women at the University

Through regular meetings I am able to keep the President informed of my work, to get his counsel, and to be briefed on key items relevant to my concerns. I am also in frequent touch with staff in the Vice-Presidential offices, the Governing Council secretariat, and, as issues arise, with heads of other academic and administrative units.

The areas of policy development and review which have engaged most of my attention over the last several months are employment equity, academic appointments, and sexual harassment. As a drafter of the original Employment Equity Policy in 1986, I took an obvious and active interest in its re-examination in terms of the University's commitments under the Federal Contractors Program. Employment Equity Co-ordinator Mary Lynne McIntosh kept me fully in the picture, and we consulted frequently as the revised Policy took shape. The Policy, which received Governing Council approval in March, expands the focus of employment equity to four designated groups: women (a "special concern" of the previous policy), visible minorities, aboriginal people, and persons with disabilities. References to goals, timetables, and "programs to facilitate the participation and advancement of designated groups" provide a clear and strong mandate for action.

The Special Committee to Review the Policy and Procedures on Academic Appointments included me in the limited circulation of its draft revision last fall. I responded to the Chair at the time, and have more recently submitted further detailed comments on behalf of the Advisory Committee to the Status of Women Officer to the Yip Committee's final report. While this latter is in my view a significant improvement over the earlier draft, I and others on my Committee continue to see the report as a whole as an essentially conservative one without the kinds of provisions and options we believe critical to the achievement of employment equity. Given that I consider these matters of considerable urgency, I also regret the length of time this admittedly complex process is taking; however, I am encouraged by the degree of interest and quality of debate.

I met with the Special Committee to Review the Policy and Procedures: Sexual Harassment at an early stage of its deliberations. After consultation with my Advisory Committee, I wrote to the University Affairs Board when comments were invited on the Wolf Committee recommendations. We identified principles which we consider paramount in such a policy - its educational function, and institutional role and responsibility. In our response, we welcomed the intent of the proposed changes in definitions and in the standard of proof, and provisions which would enable the University under certain circumstances to proceed as complainant. My first-hand experience with the operation of the policy has given me added insight

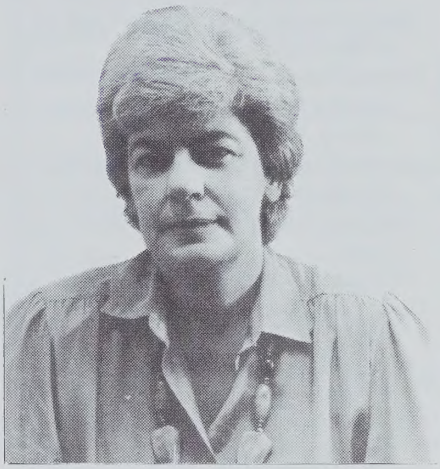

PHOTO: THE VARSITY

as I continue to be involved both in the public debate and in informal discussions with colleagues.

I was invited to speak to the decanal Task Force on Professional Image and Women in Engineering, and I have reviewed aspects of its subsequent report with the Dean and others. Issues around women in science and engineering, and specific measures to increase their numbers and enrich their experience, have received heightened attention since the murders at l'Ecole Polytechnique. I applaud Gary Heinke's initiative in establishing the Task Force. It's a step in the right direction, but one that implies active follow-up; I hope to be able to encourage and assist in this process.

My advisory role is reflected in a number of other ways, for example, my annual participation in the orientation for newly-appointed academic administrators. Last fall (also wearing my sexual harassment hat) I shared information sessions with the Employment Equity Co-ordinator and the Ombudsperson.

I have referred to the Advisory Committee to the Status of Women Officer. The Committee has had ten meetings this year, and smaller sub-groups have met to deal with particular tasks. In addition to the work already mentioned relating to academic appointments and sexual harassment, the Advisory

Advisory Committee to the Status of Women Officer 1990-1991

Jane Abray, Division of Humanities (History), Scarborough
Susan Addario, Personal Safety Awareness Officer
Kay Armatage, Co-ordinator, Women's Studies Program
Donna Crossan, Assistant Dean, Faculty of Dentistry
Michael Dafoe, Administrative Assistant, Student Affairs, and Department of History, Erindale
Jennifer Guyatt, Academic Counsellor, Woodsworth College
Joan Lax, Assistant Dean, Faculty of Law
Alison Li , Graduate student (IHPST)
Mary Lynne McIntosh, Employment Equity Co-ordinator
Kathryn Morgan, Department of Philosophy
Stacey Papernick, Full-time undergraduate student (New College)
Lois Reimer, Status of Women Officer (Chair)
Helen Rosenthal, Division of Physical Sciences (Mathematics), Scarborough
John Shaw, Department of Chemical Engineering
Paddy Stamp, Sexual Harassment Officer (since February 1991)
Rachel Webster, Canadian Institute for Theoretical Astrophysics
Jacquelyn Wolf, Director, School of Continuing Studies

Committee's recent activities include a submission to the Presidential Committee to Review the Role of Hart House, consideration of a gender-neutral language policy as an essential component of employment and educational equity, discussion of issues relating to teaching and classroom climate, and - following the Committee's meeting with the President in February - thoughts on institutional responses to the increasing level of awareness and concern around broader human rights issues.

I can count on its members individually and collectively for inspiration, judgment, support, and criticism, and believe that the fact that the Advisory Committee does not have a formal mandate or authority enables us to work together in a signally complementary and constructive manner. The Committee is made up of students, faculty, and administrative staff. (A list of the 1990-91 membership is appended to this report.) Although terms are not fixed, I aim to replace about a third of the members each year, in order to obtain a balance of experience and renewal.

Initiating and assisting research into the status of women at the University

On the statistical side, I continue to look for trends and, it is hoped, progress toward goals which will indicate improvement in the role and representation of women. With faculty I tend to focus on tenured/tenure stream, and each year await information on "new hires" (compared with women in the potential applicant pool) to see the effect on what has remained a notably static picture for some time.

I am an assessor on the Female Faculty Salary Review Committee, and look forward to the conclusion of the study for what it may (or may not) reveal in the way of patterns or "pockets" of differential treatment. I would also like to encourage a corresponding look at promotions: do women faculty on average advance at the same pace as men, and if not, might there be discernible systemic factors at work? To my knowledge these data are not readily available, but possibly some of the methodology and information from the salary review could be useful in other ways.

With respect to administrative staff, my yearly salary grade/range analyses should be particularly interesting this year because the figures will show the further impact of our pay equity exercise. With adjustments made with a view to recognizing and rewarding work of equal value (in terms of skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions), we can devote our energies to other aspects of employment equity such as the classifications and levels in which women (or men) are heavily concentrated, training and the development of career paths, etc.

Prime responsibility for these matters naturally rests with Human Resources; my role as I see it is to identify and advance, however and whenever I can, the interests of the constituencies my office is here to serve. Needless to say, more of my agenda with respect to academic and administrative staff should be realized as consultation and goal-setting proceed as part of the University's employment equity work plan.

While I certainly continue to watch enrolment by gender, especially in the sciences and in the transition (and attrition) from undergraduate to graduate programs, I am equally interested in qualitative data about our student population. Work such as that being done by the SGS Gender Issues Committee, of which I am a member, and some Provostial initiatives, for example, to examine the undergraduate student experience and to improve the quality of teaching, excite me because of their potential to enhance the learning environment for all students, growing numbers of whom are women.

Meanwhile, I continue to try - with mixed success - to encourage colleagues routinely to include breakdowns by sex in studies, reports, etc. I think it can be argued that even the absence of significant differences is useful information.

Organizing and sponsoring activities relevant to women at the University

Adapting the U of T Day tent theme "Discover Our Diversity", the Status of Women Office organized an exhibit on October 13 under the banner "Celebrating Our Diverse Community". I brought together some of the groups and administrative units dedicated to serving a medley of interests and needs with the aim of ensuring that all who come here to study and work may do so with a sense of well-being, confidence, and respect for others.

"The Blue and White" also burst forth on the front campus in its new gender-neutral form on U of T Day. The song has been more or less on the shelf since complaints about its male-centred words and imagery followed its performance at President Connell's installation.

PHOTO: STATUS OF WOMEN OFFICE

Suggestions that "something be done" kept surfacing and were usually pointed in my direction, and last summer I finally looked to a small group of understanding colleagues for help. By means of advertisements in the campus papers we invited bards either seasoned or budding to let us have their suggestions for new words, and we made a sober and sensitive selection. I am not aware of a sudden or significant surge in the song's popularity as a result of our dedicated work, but as with many of my undertakings I have learned to be patient.

December 6 marked the first anniversary of the slayings in Montreal. I coordinated planning of the commemorative service for the St. George Campus community. I believe it is important that this day and event be kept and remembered. However, I would also like to see different – and more substantive or enduring – forms of remembrance. (The trees in Philosopher's Walk, a proposal that originated with a group of off-campus women, are just an example.)

A second teach-in on sexism and violence against women scheduled for this spring was postponed until fall because of the strikes on campus. The planning committee - as last year - was drawn from a number of parts of the University, including my office.

I successfully bid for a position under the Ontario Work-Study Plan, and was able to revive my newsletter *Equity Matters* this year. Due to unavoidable personal circumstances my student assistant could not give as much time to the job as first expected; however, one issue has appeared and I hope to produce at least one more over the summer.

The office was able to provide modest financial help to other projects, such as the Committee on Homophobia's Gay/Lesbian Awareness Week, the Women's Studies Research Project (to establish a data base of faculty involved in research directed or of concern to women), and the annual conference, held in Toronto last fall, of the Canadian Association Against Sexual Harassment in Higher Education.

Finally, believing it is important to recognize outstanding women and highlight their achievement, I nominated or supported candidates for an honorary degree, the YWCA Women of Distinction Award, and a Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case.

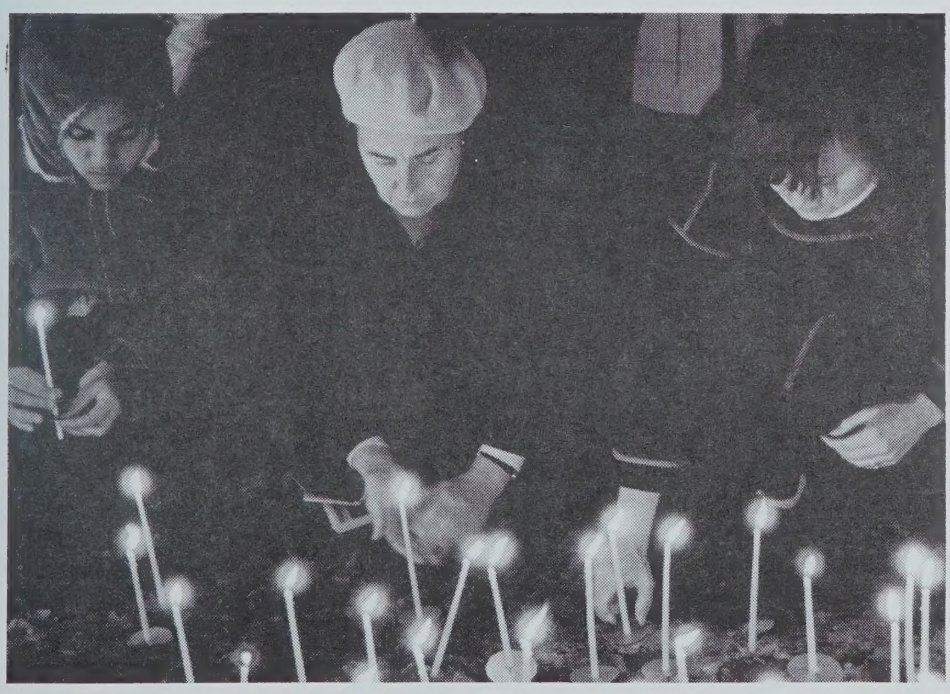

PHOTO: JEWEL RANDOLPH

Representing the University both internally and externally in women's activities and ***Communicating and working with other individuals involved with women's issues both inside and outside the University***

In the world in which we spend our days (and many of our evenings), working with others often means serving on committees with them. I have already mentioned the School of Graduate Studies' Gender Issues Committee and the Female Faculty Salary Review Committee. I was involved in the Sexual Harassment Officer search - a gruelling, but ultimately highly rewarding, process - and the Hart House Users Committee concerned with the review and improvement of the locker and attendant facilities for women. I remain a member of the Advisory Committee on Personal Safety, and am happy to be part of the launch of the Presidential Advisory Committee on Race Relations and Anti-Racism Initiatives.

I also keep lines open to other groups which have women's concerns as a priority: The Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women, the UTFA and UTSA Status of Women Committees, the SAC Women's Issues Committee, etc.

Off-campus, my past membership on the Council of Ontario Universities' Status of Women Committee was I am sure instrumental in my being invited recently to assist in the preparation of a "survival guide" for women academic staff. I am a member of the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services, and meet with the Senior Women Academic Administrators of Canada, as well as my counterparts from other universities from time to time.

I have been following with interest the work of the Canadian Committee on Women in Engineering. A national committee struck to investigate the participation of and environment for women in engineering in Canada, it is chaired by Monique Frize, who holds the Northern Telecom/NSERC Chair in

Women in Engineering at the University of New Brunswick. I have corresponded with Dr. Frize, and was interviewed by a member of the research team which is working with her committee.

I am frequently one of the first points of contact on women's issues for outside agencies and organizations such as the Ontario Women's Directorate, various advisory councils on the status of women, the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), and so on. Having readily identifiable and credible offices or functions is a time- (and trouble-) saver, whether the University is dealing with a reporter intent on a scorching headline, or an individual or group in the community that doesn't know what to expect of the University or has expectations that for one reason or another cannot be met. There are occasions when I think that we could better plan and strengthen our "response system", but in the areas of women's issues (including women's studies), sexism and sexual harassment, personal safety, etc. I believe that the University of Toronto is well equipped to deal intelligently and sensitively with the media both on- and off-campus.

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An account of my activities over the past year is incomplete without a comment about my experience as acting Sexual Harassment Officer from September until February. The substance of my work in that capacity will be part of the report of that office. The *impact* of the dual assignment was immediate and sustained over the five months. I did not attempt to keep a record of the proportion of time I spent on sexual harassment matters, but would estimate it to be perhaps 50/60%, or roughly 25% of the year as a whole.

Counselling individuals seeking advice and help was my obvious priority. I handled close to thirty informal complaints; of these a few were outstanding when the new Officer took up her appointment, and where appropriate were referred to her. I also fielded a very large number and variety of general enquiries, many from outside the University. These ranged from individuals encountering harassment in their workplace, to corporations and other institutions in the process of developing policies and procedures of their own, to assorted students/professionals/policy advisors etc. doing research. Clearly the University of Toronto is seen and used by many as a convenient, accessible, and authoritative source of information, and the consequent demand on the Sexual Harassment Office is heavy. With the exception of a few events, the important education and outreach functions were inevitably on hold, and I was frequently reminded of Nancy Adamson's fine work in this area. I found the experience at once stimulating and draining, with a high stress quotient.

As Status of Women Officer I concentrated on the policy issues I have already mentioned (and had to ask for forbearance more than once when my submissions or responses were late!), and on meeting regularly with my Advisory Committee. I cut back on the attention I would normally have given to projects and programs (such as an exposure draft of an inclusive language policy, and development of a "position paper" on child care, both of which were overtaken by sexual harassment responsibilities). The pressure was compounded by the fact that during this period secretarial services for both offices were also performed by one person, latterly on a temporary basis.

Paddy Stamp, who became Sexual Harassment Officer in February, and I have discussed appropriate fall-back measures when she is away. We agree that while we may work together on a given task, it is important that there be no confusion about our offices or the perception of our roles, and that my regularly stepping in in her absence is not the best answer. We have developed a proposal involving a small but diversely skilled network which we think will be more effective in both practical and "political" terms.

In the Status of Women Office, Sandra Grant resigned during the year to pursue other interests. Sandra and I worked closely together for a long time, and she takes with her my warmest thanks and good wishes. I am grateful too to Catherine Crockett from our Secretarial and Word Processing Service, who has filled in ably and affably over the past several months.

It has obviously been an unusually challenging year for the Status of Women Office (and the Sexual Harassment Office!). However, I was fortunate once again to have been able to rely on the wisdom, co-operation, and above all the support of a good many friends and colleagues across the University.

Lois Reimer

Equity Matters

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and Catherine Crockett
Status of Women Office
978-2196 / 2757
with thanks (again) to
Beth Earl Rose,
University of Toronto Press

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